

THE POWER OF SHAME

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SHAME

- **WHAT IS IT?**
- **WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?**
- **HOW CAN I RECOGNIZE IT?**
- **WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?**

“ Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging. ”

Brene Brown, *I thought it was Just Me (But it wasn't)*

Embarrassment—fleeting and normalized

Guilt—not who we want to be; I made a mistake

Humiliation—undeserved

Shame—feels deserved; I AM a mistake

SHAME

You CANNOT shame or belittle people into changing their behaviors.

Shame is organized by gender

Women: “The expectations that fuel shame for women are based on our culture’s perception of what is acceptable for women.” Brown

Shame is organized by gender

Men: The expectations that fuel shame for men are based on our culture's perception of masculinity. Brown

Expectations

- **Who we should be**
- **What we should be**
- **How we should be**

Shame

Fear

Blame

Disconnection

Shame Resilience



The ability to recognize shame when we experience it and move through it in a constructive way that allows us to maintain our authenticity and grow from our experiences. Brown

Empathy

The skill or ability to tap into our own experiences in order to connect with an experience someone is relating to us.

Empathy

Women with high levels of shame resilience were both **givers** and **receivers** of empathy. Brown

Shame resilience

1. The ability to recognize and understand their shame triggers
2. High levels of critical awareness about their shame web/box
3. The willingness to reach out to others
4. The ability to speak shame

**Using
Shame
Screens**

**Recognizing
Shame and
Triggers**

**Awareness
Understanding**



Recognize shame

How does our body react and how do we feel?

I physically feel shame in/on my _____

It feels like _____

I know I'm in shame when I feel _____

If I could taste shame, it would taste like _____

If I could smell shame, it would smell like _____

If I could touch shame, it would feel like _____

Shame triggers

- Appearance and body image
- Motherhood
- Family
- Parenting
- Money and work
- Mental and physical health
- Sex
- Aging
- Religion
- Being stereotyped and labeled
- Speaking out
- Surviving trauma

Shame triggers

- Be strong, fearless and powerful
- Do not let people see anything that can be perceived as weakness

Unwanted identities

I want to be perceived as _____,
_____, _____,
_____ and _____.

I do NOT want to be perceived as _____,
_____, _____,
_____ or _____.

Source of triggers

1. What do these perceptions mean to us?
2. Why are they so unwanted?
3. Where did they come from?

What are we saying to ourselves?

Triggers

If people reduce me to this list, what importance or wonderful things will they miss about me?

Shame screens

1. Move away
2. Move toward
3. Move against

**Reinforcing
Individualizing
Pathologizing**

**Practicing
Critical
Awareness**

**Demystifying
Contextualizing
Normalizing**



Practicing critical awareness

Reinforcing—I ought to be ashamed

Individualizing—I am the only one

Pathologizing—something is wrong with me

Practicing critical awareness

Demystifying—I will share what I know with others

Contextualizing—I see the big picture

Normalizing—I am not the only one

**Separating
Insulating**

**Reaching
Out**

**Share our story
Create change**



Reaching out

Separating— isolation
Insulating— “those people”

Sharing our story
Creating change

Shutting down
Acting out

Speaking
Shame



Express how we feel
Ask for what we need

Practice courage in a culture of fear

Shame versus perfectionism—edit together our best clips

Perfectionism

Body image—when we begin to blame and hate our bodies for failing to live up to expectations, we start splitting ourselves into parts and move away from wholeness—our authentic selves

Caregiving—different from parenting

Shame

Fear
Blame
Disconnection

Shame Resilience



Empathy

Courage
Compassion
Connection

We cannot survive when our identity is defined by or limited to our worst behavior. Every human must be able to view the self as complex and multidimensional. When this fact is obscured, people will wrap themselves in layers of denial in order to survive. How can we apologize for something we are, rather than something we did?

Dr. Harriet Lerner-*The Dance of Connection*

**Go and do
amazing things!**

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